(b) If so, the reasons therefor and the steps proposed to be taken to improve them;

(c) whether there is any plan to revive the grant of special duty allowance to the postal employees posted in the North-Eastern States and pay the arrear SDA to them to the period upto the date of Supreme Court ruling in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof;

(e) whether there is any contemplation to regularise the services of E.D. employees (Extra Departmental) whose services have been to be most essential to the Department over the years; and

(f) if so, the time by which it is likely to be materialised?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA): (a) and (b) Postal Services in the North Eastern States are by and large satisfactory. However, there are instances of delay in mails due to the reasons like cancellation of and late running of mail carrying planes, trains and buses, natural calamities, bandhs and insurgency in one State or the other in the Region. Corrective actions are taken on all such occasions to maintain the services. Mail arrangement for North-Eastern States has been reviewed recently and direct flights from Calcutta to Aizwal and Dimapur and vice versa are being utilized for speeding mail to and from these areas. To improve the quality of service in the Region, a number of modernisation of projects have also been undertaken including setting up of VSAT stations for speeding of money order service.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise in view of (c) above.

(e) and (f) ED employees are part of the postal system of the country and the terms and conditions of service are reviewed from time to time.

Allotment of Defence Land to Private Parties

*75. DR. M. JAGANNATH:

SHRI S. RAMACHANDRA REDDY:

Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether prime Defence lands meant for the Army training have been allotted to various private parties in violation of the rules and protests made by the Chiefs of Defence forces;

(b) if so, the details of Defence lands allotted to private parties, lying unused or converted for other uses during the last three years;

(c) whether the Government propose to cancel the allotment of prime defence lands to private parties;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor;

(e) whether the Government propose to formulate a land management policy to check the misuse of defence lands;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI MULAYAM SINGH YADAV): (a) to (d) No prime defence land used for Army Training has been allotted to private parties in violation of rules.

(e) to (g) As per direction of the Prime Minister transfer/ alienation of all defence land has been prohibited except with the specific prior approval of the Cabinet. Further, instructions have been issued freezing all commercial use of defence land and buildings.

Foreign Degrees

*76. SHRI V.V.RAGHAVAN:

SHRI N.S.V. CHITTHAN:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether attention of the Government had been drawn to the news-item appearing in the Indian Express captioned "Students make beeline for cash-and-carry foreign degrees", dated October 14, 1997;

(b) if so, the facts of the matter reported therein;

(c) whether the Government have any mechanism to monitor or check such universities that have set up shops in India; and

(d) If so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI S.R.BOMMAI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The matter is sub-judice before the Madras High Court on a Petition moved by one Shri R. Sethuraman challenging the legality of foreign universities functioning in the country. While the case is yet to be finally disposed off, the honourable Court has permitted such universities to operate in the country subject ot certain restrictions till the final disposal of the case.

Cauvery Water Dispute

*77. SHRI N.DENNIS:

SHRI A.G.S. RAM BABU:

Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Chief Ministers of Southern States recently held a meeting to discuss the Cauvery Water Dispute;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and